

BOOK OF JONAH

by Willis E. Bishop
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Introduction

Turn to Jonah, one of the minor prophets of the Old Testament. The minor prophets are the last twelve books of the Old Testament. They are minor prophets, not because they are of lesser importance, but because they are shorter books than, for example, Isaiah or Jeremiah.

Jonah 1:1: Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, [the prophet], saying

We do not know for sure the author of the book. Tradition says that the book was Jonah's own report of his experiences and written soon afterwards.

Notice, at the close of chapter 1 Jonah is spoken of in the third person: Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

In chapter 2:1: Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, and he said, "And I cried out to the Lord" [using the first person].

It seems that Jonah is recording what he himself had said.

It is not unusual for writers to use the third person. Moses wrote the Pentateuch, which is written in the third person. Because in Jonah chapter 2 the first person is used, I am inclined to think he is the one who knew best what he was praying in the belly of the fish and quite probably he is the author of the book of Jonah.

The date of the prophet Jonah. As a suggestion, there is only one other place in the Old Testament where Jonah, the son of Amittai, is mentioned. That is in II Kings 14:25, which reads: [Jereboam the second] restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of Arabah [that is, the Dead Sea] according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hopher.

There is the identity of Jonah, the son of Amittai, and that he spoke a prophecy which was fulfilled during the reign of Jereboam the second. When God called Jonah to go to Nineveh, he called on a successful prophet. Since the date of Jereboam was around 782 to 753 B.C., Jonah probably lived during that time.

In the II Kings 14:25 passage it says he was from Gath Hopher. Cana of Galilee is in a northeasterly direction from Nazareth, and down the hill to the left is a spot called Gath Hopher, which they say is the place Jonah was born.

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Here is a man from Gath Hepher, probably a successful prophet, whom God now calls upon to do a particular task.

The historicity of Jonah is established by the Lord Jesus. Jonah is the only minor prophet who is specifically mentioned by the Lord Jesus, and the only prophet with whom He compares Himself.

The Jews also believed that Jonah was an actual person. This was not a parable or an allegory, but he actually lived and this is a true account. For example, in Tobit 14:4 it says, "I surely believe these things which Jonah the prophet spoke of Nineveh." In III Macabees 6:8, it speaks of him in the belly of the sea-bred monster.

Our Lord's references surely settles this for us. Turn to Matthew 12, beginning with verse 38: Then some of the Scribes and Pharisees answered saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and a sign will not be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here."

There is a clear reference from our Lord to the actual existence of Jonah.

As an aside, I do not think that Jonah was a type of Christ. Nor do I think his life and ministry was a prophecy of Christ. Notice, Christ said, "as Jonah was three days and three nights" That is a simile, a figure of speech. He uses it as an illustration. Also, at the end of Jonah's life, it was not intended to be a prophecy of the coming Lord. We will come to more of this in Jonah chapter 2.

In Matthew chapter 16, is another testimony of our Lord to the reality of Jonah, verse 1: Then the Pharisees and the Sadducees came testing Him [that is, Jesus], asking that He would show them a sign from heaven. But He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning it will be stormy weather today, for the sky is red and threatening. Hypocrites! You indeed know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.

There again the Lord makes a clear reference to Jonah. I sometimes like to think, though I'm sure it is imagination, that when our Lord

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was on the cross and the sky was darkened and they became fearful, I wonder whether that wasn't really again a sign from Heaven concerning our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then in Luke chapter 11 beginning with verse 29: And as the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For even as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up in judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

There again our Lord testifies to the reality of the person and experience of Jonah.

In verse 30 [of Luke 11], let me ask a question. "For even as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites" - how was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites? I will make a suggestion or two.

First, because Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days, it is possible that the digestive juices may have begun to eat at his skin. He may have lost his hair. This is true of folks who have been recovered from that sort of an experience. So as he walked in there they may have asked him, "What has happened to you?" And he explained his situation.

The other suggestion is that in this first chapter of Jonah, you remember he is out on the sea and the sailors ask why this storm is there. And Jonah says, "Because of me. If you throw me overboard the storm will cease." Eventually they did that.

Having thrown out all of their cargo, where do you suppose they went? I suggest that they went back to Joppa for another load, and all the while Jonah was riding in the belly of the fish. When those sailors pulled back into port they explained their experience with Jonah and the storm. No doubt the story was repeated in the land, and I suggest that it may have traveled to Nineveh. They presumed he was dead because he had been swallowed by a fish.

Instead, Jonah appeared to the people of Nineveh and prophesied that they would be destroyed in forty days unless they repented. He may have, indeed, been a very, very important sign to the Ninevites of the truth of God's word.

One other reference is in John chapter 7 where the Pharisees were wrong, beginning with verse 37: On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believe in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his inner self will flow rivers of living water."

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But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing on Him were about to receive, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Therefore, many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the prophet" [in other words, He is the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15]. Others said, "This is the Christ" [the Messiah]. But others said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him.

Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" And the officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man."

Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed. Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" [he is quoting the law from Deuteronomy and Exodus].

They answered and said to him, "Are you also a Galilean? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee." And everyone went to his own house.

"No prophet has arisen out of Galilee." Pharisees, we beg your pardon. Jonah was from Galilee. Also, in checking further, we find that Deborah, who was a judge and a prophetess, was also from Galilee (Judges 4:5). Elisha the prophet was from Galilee, and his thrilling story is in II Kings. So the Pharisees were entirely wrong when they said, "No prophet has arisen out of Galilee."

An outline of the book. I don't know to whom to give credit, but I like it - it is simple and understandable.

- Jonah and the storm - chapter 1
- Jonah in the fish - chapter 2 [his prayer]
- Jonah in the city - chapter 3
- Jonah and the Lord - chapter 4 [that is where he argues with the Lord about the nondestruction of the Ninevites)

Just a brief word about the geography of the book. Jonah is from Gath Hepher, which is in the area of Nazareth and Cana in Galilee. Nineveh is to the northeast in Assyria on the Tigris River, about 400 or 500 miles from Jonah's home. Instead of traveling northeast

to Nineveh, Jonah went the opposite direction to Joppa where he boarded a ship bound for Tarshish. There is a little problem identifying the place called Tarshish.

I checked my concordance and found that the word "Tarshish" occurs at least twenty-five times in the Old Testament, and in nine of those times it refers to the ships of Tarshish.

The most common identification has been in the area of Spain. There are inscriptions that seem to indicate that. But it is possible that Tarshish is in another location. Use a map - perhaps one in the back of your Bible. Note the Gulf of Aqabah and the Red Sea.

In I Kings 10 we find that Solomon built some ships at Ezion-Geber on the Gulf of Aqabah. They sailed south through the gulf and they may have gone through the Red Sea and then east to India. In the I Kings passage it says that once every three years they brought gold, silver, ivory, apes and monkeys. So Tarshish could have been in the East.

I think I remember a Jewish scholar named Cyrus Gordon who claimed that "Tarshish" may have meant the western hemisphere. Some inscriptions have been found which they were not able to read and which look like ancient Hebrew.

Apparently "Tarshish" simply means a very far off place, and Jonah was trying to get as far away as possible.

[End of Introduction]

Turn to Jonah 1:1-3: Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me. But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare, went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah is commanded to go to Nineveh. Normally Jewish prophets ministered to their own people. But you remember that Elijah went to Sidon - the story of the widow and her oil. Also Elisha ministered to the Syrian, Naaman the leper. So there is precedent for the Lord to have a concern for the Gentile peoples.

Instead of going to Nineveh, in verse 3, Jonah "arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." The question has been asked, "Why did Jonah flee?"

In looking at the historical background, we note that Assyria was a great Gentile nation and very, very fierce. Syria had been crushed by them, and they were a leading threat to Israel. They had already captured Damascus, had gone into Galilee, Jezreel and Gilead. Jonah

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knew that and that Assyria was on its way to conquer his nation Israel.

Apparently he decided that if he went to Nineveh and preached and they repented, then Assyria would be saved and would later come and take his own people Israel. But if he did not go, Assyria would not hear the word of the Lord, God would need to bring judgment, and his own people would be saved. It was not a matter of cowardice. It was a matter of patriotism.

Jonah 1:4-7: But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea so that the ship was about to be broken up. Then the mariners were afraid, and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

So the captain came to him and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God. Perhaps your God will consider us so that we may not perish. And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast the lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

A word about that tempest on the Mediterranean Sea. In recalling the experience of the Apostle Paul who was taken as a prisoner on the way to Rome, we remember that they were caught in a terrible storm. The sailors knew better than to go out at that time because it was the season of the year, from November 11 to March 10, when storms occurred on the Mediterranean Sea. But they had hoped to find a better place for the winter and they got caught in the storm.

But in the story of Jonah it must not have been that time of the year because the sailors would not have even begun their journey at that season. And so this storm was not an ordinary storm but one that the Lord sent for His own particular purpose.

During that storm we find that Jonah is asleep in the lowest part of the ship. I suppose it is a little bit of humor, but the Septuagint version (a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek) says that he snored, and that is the way the mariners found him.

They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. Casting lots was a common practice in the Old Testament. Proverbs 16:33 says, "The lot is cast into the lap but the disposing thereof is of the Lord."

Verse 8: And they said to him, "Please tell us. For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

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Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord because he had told them.

Notice in verse 3, the last words, he went to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Apparently he told them that and they knew it must be his God who was bringing about this storm.

Turn to II Chronicles 29 - what did it mean to flee from the presence of the Lord? Beginning with verse 11: My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him and burn incense.

To stand before the presence of the Lord was to serve Him. Elijah, in I Kings 17, said to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be no dew nor rain except at my word." In other words, to be in the presence of the Lord meant, in their kind of language, to serve the Lord.

Apparently, when Jonah was fleeing from the presence of the Lord he meant, "I am resigning my commission as a prophet."

Look at Jonah chapter 2 at the close of verse 9, after his ride in the fish and his prayer. He said, "I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving. I will pay what I have vowed."

He had promised to serve the Lord, he had backed out on that, and now having had the experience in the fish he says, "I'll take that vow up again," so that in chapter 3 he is on his way to Nineveh.

Q. Where did the fish put him out on shore?

A. I'll tell you a little story. There have been all kinds of guesses about that. An ancient writer suggested that the fish took him all the way up into the Black Sea. But a number of years ago when I visited Beirut, Lebanon, I wanted to see Tyre and Sidon, down the coast toward Israel. Some companions and I got a driver who took us down - the road runs right along the coastline. On the way back, about halfway between Sidon and Beirut, I noticed a sign along the road. I couldn't read it exactly, but I said to the driver, "Isn't that the word 'Jonah'?" He replied, "Yes, this is the traditional place where Jonah was spit out onto the dry land." The Scripture doesn't say where Jonah was deposited on dry land, but that suggestion of the sign there seems to me to be as good as any.

Jonah 1:11-16: Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us? -- for the sea was growing more tempestuous. And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for

you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me." Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. Then they cried out to the LORD ...

Notice that word is in capital letters. That is Jonah's God. They were not calling out to their own heathen gods but to the Lord God of Jonah. And they said, in verse 14: "We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood, for you O LORD, have done as it pleased You." So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.

Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD, and took vows.

It seems to me that in this whole experience they came to know the Lord of Jonah. But I want to point to an interesting thing about human nature.

In verse 12 Jonah said to the men, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will be calm for you." Jonah was interested in saving the lives of the mariners. But in verse 13, "Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to return to land ...," they tried to save Jonah. So there is something in human nature, apart from being a Christian, in which there is good in everybody. Jonah wanted to save them and they wanted to save Jonah. But the Lord had other plans, and it was only after Jonah was tossed into the sea that the sea became calm.

The sailors offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows. To offer a sacrifice to Jonah's God would mean they would have to go to Jerusalem. That would have been after they returned to land.

One of the things that people disbelieve about the book of Jonah is in verse 17: Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

What was this fish? Some translations use "whale." The Hebrew identification of the word used in this passage is: "the identity or biological classification of the great water monster is unknown as Jonah did not give us details about the miracle." So there is no definite biological distinction that is made for that word.

Then, in the New Testament (Matthew 12:40) where the Lord speaks about it, and the Greek word simply stands for "a sea monster."

Sharks have been found that were large enough and indeed did swallow a complete human being without crushing the frame. But if it had been a shark that swallowed Jonah, he would have drowned as quickly as he would have in the sea because he would have been in the water itself. Someone might say, "The Lord could have taken care of that

situation," and I do not question that at all. But the words in the passage are broad enough to include a whale or a large air-breathing animal.

There is one kind of whale with a small throat, which could not swallow a human being. Years ago when I was in high school, a fellow had gotten hold of one of these and brought it on a flatcar. People asked if this whale could have swallowed a man, and he would say "No." Unfortunately, that did damage to those who believed the story of Jonah.

But there is another kind of whale which is fully capable of swallowing a man. The mouth is a third the length of the whale. When they are hungry they simply open their mouths and swallow whatever is in front of them. They close their mouths, push the water out and swallow whatever they have picked up. They have a series of stomachs and can throw inedible objects into an air chamber in their heads. The items disintegrate and, with a mouthful of air, are then blown back into the water through the hole in the top of their heads. Air is always in that head chamber, which is as large as a closet. There was an account of a dog swallowed by a whale and was found alive eight days later when the whale was captured.

Many years ago, Ripley, of "Believe It Or Not," on a radio program, interviewed a man who had been swallowed by a whale. He had been in the whale two days and two nights before the whale was captured. He said that he fainted when he was swallowed, and when he awoke in a hospital he fainted again. I heard that man testify on the radio.

The Lord could keep a man one more day and one more night, set him on the shore and on his way to Nineveh. I see no reason at all why the great fish, or the whale, is not a true part of the story of Jonah.

Prayer: Our Father, we thank You for Your ways with us, and for the fact that the Word of God is true. Our Lord said so, we believe it, and we see it to be reasonable as God puts His hand upon a man and sends him in the direction that he ought to go. As we think about our own lives, we do not know what the day will hold, but we pray that in trust and faith we may be assured that You will hold us and keep us for Your glory. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

We are at the end of Jonah 1, reading verse 17: Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

At this point in the book of Jonah we have, I think, two illustrations of the sovereignty of God and how He works behind the scenes to bring about His purposes.

I will read the first few verses of Psalm 148: Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens. Praise Him in the heights.

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Praise Him all His angels. Praise Him all His hosts. Praise Him sun and moon. Praise Him all you stars of light. Praise Him you heavens of heavens and you waters above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created. He also established them forever and ever. He made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all the depths.

Here is the verse I am after, verse 8:

Fire and hail, snow and clouds, stormy wind fulfilling His word.

Somewhere behind the scene God is working in a sovereign way to fulfill His purposes. That was true here in connection with Jonah and the great fish. It says in Jonah 1:17 that the Lord had prepared a great fish. Jewish tradition says that the fish was created by God on the sixth day of creation and that He kept that fish until Jonah appeared on the scene. At any rate, the Lord simply picked out a fish and nudged him and said, "Get over there, I have a rider for you in a few minutes." And the fish obeyed.

I wonder sometimes about hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and so on. Do we really see in those God's sovereignty? We are sorry for the folks to whom it happens. And yet, God in His will is working through those terrible incidents.

Here in Jonah we have God's sovereignty. For example, back in chapter 1 verse 4, we notice that "the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea and there was a mighty tempest." The Lord was behind that mighty tempest. In verse 17 He prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. Later on we will look at chapter 2 verse 10 where God spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah onto the dry land. In chapter 4, which we will discuss in more detail later, in verse 6 the Lord prepared a plant, in verse 7 He prepared a worm, and in 8 He prepared a vehement east wind. Behind all of those we see the sovereignty of God in the lives of Jonah and the people of Nineveh.

Perhaps it is in some sense a Romans 8:28 of the Old Testament, for God works all things together for good to those who love the Lord. And so we have here an insight into the sovereignty of God in creation. I still remember back in Ohio when we had thunderstorms that my mother would get the Bible and read because we were to be thinking about God in the midst of those storms.

The ride in the whale's belly was not a punishment on Jonah but a lifesaver. Someone has pointed that out and I believe it is true. When you are overboard in the sea it doesn't take long to perish. But the Lord sent a fish for the purpose of saving Jonah's life.

A number of years ago I was invited by one of our graduates from Washington Bible College to hold a week of meetings along with a

professor from another college. I stayed in a motel and had some free time. Nearby was the Norfolk Naval Museum, which I visited, and it was fascinating to see the history of naval development. I was captivated by one small picture entitled, "The First Submarine." There, in very fine taste, was the picture of a whale, with an inset of Jonah.

The Lord sent that fish to preserve Jonah and to give him time to think and pray, as in chapter 2.

Jonah 2:1: Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly. And he said, "I cried out to the Lord out of my affliction, and He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice. For You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the floods surrounded me. All Your billows and Your waves passed over Me, and I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight. Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' Waters surrounded me even to my soul. Deep closed around me, weeds were wrapped around my head. I went down to the bases of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever.

"But You have brought me up and my life from corruption, O Lord, my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord, and my prayer went up to You into Your holy temple. Those who regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." And the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah onto dry ground.

A couple of observations, and there are those who differ from me on this. But I do not believe that Jonah died in the belly of the fish. In verse 1 he prayed from the fish's belly. Then, in Matthew 12, the Lord said, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish" In verse 7 of chapter 2 a suggestion, I don't know for sure, but it sounds as though he may have fainted - "when my soul fainted within me."

In verse 2 Jonah says, "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried." I understand that to be figurative language. I will quote two verses from the Psalms. Psalm 86:13: "You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol." Psalm 116:3: "The pains of death surrounded me. The pangs of Sheol laid hold on me."

Those psalmists did not indicate that they had died but that they had gone through some excruciating experience. In the same way, Jonah had a terrible experience in the belly of the fish, but that does not mean he died.

Comment: We use the term, "I was scared to death."

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Observation number 2. We have a little hint here into the collection of the Psalms. It is helpful to have a Bible with center column references. Let me go into a little of the history of the Psalms.

Probably the first Psalm that was written was Psalm 90, written by Moses, about fourteen hundred years before Christ. One of the last Psalms we know is Psalm 137 where the psalmist said, "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept." That would have been the Babylonian captivity around 600 B.C. So that between the time of Moses and the time of the Babylonian captivity the Psalms were written over a period of eight hundred years. Yet somehow or other they were put together. They were collected. That certainly involved the providence of God.

Notice that Jonah quotes from a number of the Psalms. (On the aside, I think he must have been a rather young man because he remembered what he had learned. I confess that I have forgotten some of the things I have learned.) He remembered the Psalms, and there in the darkness, in the difficulty, he quoted them. I know of one author who found at least nine different allusions to the Psalms.

For example, in Jonah 2:2 there is "In my distress I cried to the Lord and He heard me." That is a reference to Psalm 20:1, which was written by one of the anonymous authors to the Psalms.

In the latter part of Jonah 2:3 he says, "All Your waves and billows have gone over me." That seems to be a reference to Psalm 42:7, a Psalm of the sons of Korah. You remember Korah was killed in the rebellion, but we are told in the Scriptures that "the sons of rebellion died not" (Numbers 26).

Then there are two Psalms by David. In chapter 2 verse 4 Jonah says, "I am cut off from before Your eyes, I am cast out of Your sight." That is probably a reference to Psalm 31:22.

And in the last part of verse 9 of chapter 2, "Salvation belongs to the Lord." That is a quotation from Psalm 3:8. These last two Psalms were written by David, around a thousand B.C.

There are probably others, but this is enough to tell me that somewhere along the way, providentially, God was bringing the book of Psalms together. Jonah knew them and in the midst of tribulation he could from memory repeat them to the Lord.

Comment: In my New International Version there are eight references to the Psalms in Jonah chapters 1 and 2.

Comment: He disobeyed God even though he knew the Scriptures.

A. I could perhaps point a finger at somebody [himself] who sometimes does the same thing. Jonah was a very human person.

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Jonah would have gone to Jerusalem and the temple after he was put on dry land. We will take that up next week.

Prayer: Our Father, we pray that we, too, may have learned the lesson to hide the Word of God in our hearts and to be prepared in any circumstance to call upon You through the promises of Your Word. Make us more obedient. And today may we so walk that others may see Christ in us. In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Jonah 2, the last verses. These are simply filled with Jonah quoting from the Psalms. And I think it is very remarkable that while riding in the belly of the fish three days and three nights Jonah offers not one single complaint in that chapter. He is simply praising the Lord all the way through.

Jonah 2:9: "I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry ground.

I indicated last week that I wanted to notice one other thing in this chapter. I believe that after Jonah was placed on dry ground he went to Jerusalem and the temple. He says in verse 9, "I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. I will pay what I have vowed."

In Psalm 66:13 and 14, the psalmist says, "I will go into Your house [that would mean the temple] with burnt offerings. I will pay my vows which my lips have uttered and my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble." If I understand the word "sacrifice" in Jonah 2:9 as literal, that could be done only in the temple at Jerusalem. So when Jonah was placed on dry ground he didn't head toward Nineveh but toward Jerusalem. There are a number of reasons why I believe that.

In the opening chapters of Leviticus there are five wonderful offerings. Leviticus 1:3 mentions the burnt sacrifice, the first of this series of five important sacrifices. The animal for this sacrifice was entirely burned on the altar with the exception of the skin. It stood to the godly Jew as a means of saying, "I'm dedicating myself, Lord, entirely to You." That sacrifice could not be brought just at any time and by itself. The offeror had to first bring a sin offering to remove his sin, and then he could dedicate himself to the Lord.

Leviticus 2:1: "And if anyone offers a grain offering ..." made entirely of grains - no flesh at all. The offeror is simply saying to the Lord, "I thank You for remembering me and supplying me with all my good needs."

Then in Leviticus 3:1: "And if his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings ..." That was thanks for divine help and blessing. We will deal with that in more detail later.

In Leviticus 4 is a sin offering. In verse 2, "Speak to the sons of Israel saying, 'If a person errs unintentionally [or in ignorance] against any of the commandments of the Lord ...' then he shall bring this kind of offering. The sin offering was for unintentional sins.

Leviticus 6:2: "If a person sins and commits a trespass against the Lord" That was a trespass offering, and it differed from the sin offering. Notice verse 5: "he shall restore its full value and add one-fifth more to it." That was a sin offering for which the amount involved could be estimated. If a fellow stole \$5 and then he came to the Lord and said, "I'm sorry," he was to restore the \$5 plus one-fifth or another dollar. This was an offering for which the value could be measured.

A godly Jew standing at the door of the temple and seeing what was put on the altar could determine what the offering was for. Every offering was different. Different things were done with the animal, there were different animals, and the Jew observing the altar knew what the offeror was trying to say to the Lord by the kind of offering that was put there.

Going back to Leviticus chapter 3, this is the kind of offering that Jonah would have brought - the peace offering. In verse 1 it says, "And if his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he offer it of the herd [an animal taken from the herd]" Then in verse 7, it states that he might offer a lamb. And in verse 12, "and if his offering is a goat ..." So it could be any one of those animals that he might choose to bring as his offering.

Jonah's statement of offering a sacrifice could be spiritualized and he could have said, "Lord, I thank You." But I don't think that is correct. He said, "I will pay the vows that I have made." I believe he went to the temple in Jerusalem to offer his sacrifice and to pay his vows.

Back to the sacrifices. For some reason Moses divided all of these sacrifices into sections. In Leviticus 7 there is additional information concerning the peace offering. Actually, only a small part of the animal was burned on the altar. A certain portion was given to the priests.

Leviticus 7:29: "Speak to the sons of Israel saying, 'He who offers a sacrifice of his peace offerings to the Lord shall bring his offering to the Lord from the sacrifice of his peace offerings, his own hands shall bring the offerings made by fire to the Lord. The fat with the breast he shall bring that the breast may be waved as a wave offering before the Lord. And the priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be Aaron's and to his sons.'" The priests did not have a regular salary. They depended upon the tithes and offerings of the people as their income. They had land around their cities that they probably used for gardens, but I don't find any indication that they had animals, and they got their meat from sacrifices of this kind.

The breast was not burned, the fat was put on the altar, and the breast was waved as a wave offering. There is some question as to the procedure of that wave offering. I suggest that it was held up and waved from side to side before the Lord.

Notice verse 32 [of Leviticus 7], "And the right thigh you shall give to the priest as a heave offering from the sacrifices of your peace offerings. He among the sons of Aaron who offers the blood of the peace offering and the fat shall have the right thigh for his part."

In other words, the breast went to all of the sons of Aaron, but the right thigh went to the priest who offered the sacrifice in behalf of the offeror.

Leviticus 7:34: "And the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering I have taken from the children of Israel, from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and I have given them to Aaron as priest and to his sons from the children of Israel for a statute forever."

The heave offering was waved in a vertical motion, so there was a difference in motion between the wave offering and the heave offering. Both of those were involved in the peace offering to the Lord.

Q. Re cutting the animal before offering it.

A. Yes, any of the sacrifices that went on the altar were cut into pieces before being offered. In the burnt offering the whole animal was placed on the altar, but it was cut into pieces.

Now in Leviticus 7 go back to verse 12 - just a remark about the offerings. "And if he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes of blended flour mixed with oil. Besides the cakes as his offering, he shall offer [notice] leavened bread"

Leaven is often spoken of as standing for sin, but that is not always true. Here leavened bread is offered to the Lord. However, it was not put on the altar.

Verse 14: "And from it he shall offer one cake from each offering as a heave offering to the Lord. It shall belong to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offering." Verse 15: "The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the same day it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until the morning." Verse 16: "But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offers his sacrifice; but on the next day the remainder of it also may be eaten;" Verse 17: "the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day must be burned with fire."

They didn't have refrigeration in those days. Notice, in the case of a vow or voluntary offering a part of the sacrifice was a meal. The offeror invited his friends and they ate of the offering, other than the breast and the thigh.

Some reasons for the peace offering. In Leviticus 7:15 it says it is a peace offering for thanksgiving.

Turn to Psalm 107, dealing with the sacrifices of thanksgiving. Why did you bring a peace offering, a sacrifice of thanksgiving? In Psalm 107:3-9: He "gathered them out of the lands from the east and from the west, from the north, from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way. They found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them. Then they cried to the Lord in their troubles and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city for a dwelling place. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" You offered a thanksgiving offering, a peace offering if you had been delivered from wandering.

Then verse 10 [Psalm 107]: "Those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, bound in affliction and irons. Because they rebelled against the words of God and despised the council of the Most High, therefore, He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of the darkness of the shadow of death and broke their chains in pieces. Oh that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

I understand that this refers, at least in part, to release from prison, for which they would thank the Lord.

Verses 17-22: "Fools, because of their transgression and because of their iniquities, were afflicted. Their soul abhorred all manner of food and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

That represented a deliverance from death -- the last of verse 18, and verse 20. Someone who was near death and then healed as he called to the Lord would bring a peace offering, thanksgiving to the Lord.

Finally in this chapter [Psalm 107], verses 23-32: "Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. For He commands and raises the stormy wind which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths. Their souls melt because of trouble; they reel to and fro and stagger like

a drunken man and are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the Lord in their troubles and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm so that the waves are still. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

That is deliverance from the troubles of the sea. That again called for a peace offering. In chapter 1 of Jonah it is said that after the storm had ceased the mariners offered to the Lord. This would have been the kind of sacrifice that they would have offered, and I understand that they would have gone to Jerusalem in order to do that.

Q. The mariners probably were Gentiles. Would they have been eligible to offer sacrifices in the temple?

A. In Jonah chapter 1 it indicates that they had accepted Jehovah. I am reading between the lines, but it seems that after they claimed Jehovah they were converted to Judaism.

Q. How would the priests know that?

A. They would have to tell them. I can't speak dogmatically, but I think it would work that way. For example, in Acts 2 there were Jews and proselytes.

Q. Re sacrifices reinstituted in the future.

A. Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48 give a number of sacrifices that will be reinstalled, but not all of them will be. There are differences of opinion among conservative scholars. Some insist they will not be. But if I interpret Ezekiel 40 through 48 literally, there will be a literal temple and literal priests, and what would they offer but literal sacrifices. I'll try to remember to look up and discuss next time which sacrifices will be reinstituted and which will not.

C. Those will be in memory of what the Lord did for us.

A. Right. The sacrifices will be in memory of what the Lord had already done. I point out also, the communion service which you and I appreciate -- "This do in remembrance of Me, until I come." Once He comes the communion service will be finished and the memorial sacrifices will take place during the Lord's reign on Earth.

Prayer: Oh, our Father, we realize the importance of trying to rightly divide the Word. We would not presume to speak where You have not spoken, but to see what You have for us in connection with every verse of Scripture. We thank you, Lord, that our peace has been made at the foot of Calvary, and that whosoever will may come, confess his sin and receive the grace of God and

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everlasting life into that heart. Minister wonderfully through the Holy Spirit. And then for us who claim You, that not only will we claim You but we will walk with You today. For it is in His name that we pray. Amen.

Turn to Leviticus chapter 7 for a question that was asked last week after the class. I suggested that Jonah had gone to the temple to offer his thanksgiving sacrifice, and we looked through those burnt, meal, peace, sin and trespass offerings in Leviticus. In chapter 7 beginning with verse 30 I read: "His own hands shall bring the offering made by fire to the Lord, the fat with the breast shall he bring that the breast may be waved as a wave offering before the Lord. The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast Aaron's and to his sons. And the right thigh you shall give to your priest as a heave offering from the sacrifices of your peace offering."

We have there a wave offering and a heave offering, and I explained that I believe that is intended to show the manner in which those pieces were offered to the Lord. The question asked after class was this. In verse 30 I read "wave offering," and that is correct. But in verse 32 I read "the thigh," and some of you in your King James have "the shoulder" instead of "thigh."

In checking the Hebrew, my theological workbook states that the word that is translated there either "thigh" or "shoulder" was used of an animal and designates the upper, thicker part of the leg. In Webster's English Dictionary it says, "extending from the hip to the knee and supported by a single large bone." My Jewish sources translate it "thigh." The NIV translates it "thigh." And the New American Standard Bible also translates it "thigh." If there is a distinction between the shoulder and the thigh, perhaps "thigh" is the better way to read that word.

[Perhaps it depends on whether the hind leg or the foreleg is used.]

Then a question came up in our discussions concerning the sacrifices in the Millennial period. In the future there are two temples. Turn to Daniel 9 beginning with verse 26: "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself." That ends sixty-nine of the seventy weeks. "And the people of the coming prince shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end of it shall be with a flood. And at the end of the war desolations are determined." Now verse 27: "And he [the prince that is to come, the Antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with the many [that is, of Israel] for one week. And in the middle of the week he shall cause to cease the sacrifice and oblation."

There is sacrifice and oblation in Daniel's seventieth week, which means there must be a temple in order to carry on that sacrifice. There is a group in Israel now that at times attempts to lay a stone to begin building a temple. A census has recently been taken of the

priests and Levites they believe would be acceptable to serve in that temple. There will be a temple during Daniel's seventieth week.

The one we are concerned about now is the Millennial temple in Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48. In these chapters there is no mention of the Ark of the Covenant. Jeremiah 3:16 says it will never be brought to mind again. In the place where the Ark once was, in the temple of Ezekiel 40 through 48 there the seat of Christ will be located as He reigns during the Millennium. There is no blood taken into the temple proper from any of the sacrifices -- that is, into the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies.

In the Millennial temple there are priests but no high priest. There is no Day of Atonement as in Leviticus 16. There is no Pentecost. There is mention of the burnt, meal, peace sin and trespass offerings. There is a daily burnt offering. There will be a Passover. There will of course be no Lord's Supper. There is no table of showbread, no altar of incense, no golden candlesticks. There are other details too numerous to mention in this study. There is one altar, a wooden one, but no explanation as to what it will be used for.

[The Millennial temple is described in Ezekiel 40-43.]

Jonah 3:1: Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-days' journey in extent.

There is a difference of opinion regarding the three-days' journey. Was that three days around or three days through? Archaeological digs at Nineveh seem to indicate that it wouldn't take three days to walk through because its circumference is only about eight miles. But there are four other cities associated with Nineveh as suburbs, which would make it the distance of a three-days' journey to go through. Genesis 10:11 and 12 give the names of those suburbs. Apparently that is intended because in Jonah 3 verse 4 he began to enter the city. So he was entering into a three-days' journey through Nineveh and its suburbs.

Jonah 3:4: And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, "Let neither man nor beast, herd or flock taste anything nor let them eat or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily to God. Yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the

violence that is in his hand. Who can tell if God will turn and relent and turn away from His fierce anger so that we may not perish?" Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God relented from the disaster that He had said he would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

A couple of details. How do we understand in verse 6, "the king of Nineveh"? Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire. But this probably does not mean that the ruler of the Assyrian empire is the one mentioned. It is probably the ruler of the city of Nineveh itself. So probably it was Nineveh and their king who repented.

Then there is a bigger problem. In verse 4 Jonah says, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Five words in the Hebrew and probably about the same in Aramaic, which Jonah would have spoken. Am I too optimistic to say that Jonah preached only one day? He did not continue, "Thirty-nine days, thirty-eight days, etc." It seems that his word was effective at the very moment that he announced that God was going to destroy them.

You remember, our Lord said, "As Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites." How was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites? Two possibilities. One was that Jonah was on board the ship going to Tarshish, and the storm came. The sailors threw overboard all the goods on the ship in order to save Jonah, but that didn't work and they finally had to throw Jonah overboard. Where did the sailors go after that?

They didn't have any more cargo so no doubt they turned back to Joppa for another load. To a question as to why they were back, they told the story about Jonah, the storm and the whale. While Jonah was riding in the great fish, and while he was going to Jerusalem to make his sacrifice, apparently the story of Jonah reached Nineveh before he did. When he walked into the city and identified himself as Jonah they were willing to listen because he was a sign to the Ninevites. It is possible that the fish's digestive juices had begun to work to alter his skin. So, "forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." That brings up a problem of interpreting prophecy, and this is important in the study of the Word of God.

Some prophecies are conditional. The condition is clearly stated. Example - in I Kings 3:14 the Lord advised Solomon, "If you walk in My ways ... then I will lengthen your days." There is a condition, an "if". Solomon was about 12 or 14 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years, so that he died in his early fifties. There was a conditional prophecy made to Solomon. You remember that he departed from the Lord.

A conditional element is implied. Jeremiah 18:7-10, a very key passage of Scripture: "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it." Notice,

the prophecy of whether or not to destroy is dependent on human agency and the nature of human action. "If you do, then I will relent."

Some prophecies are intended for the prophet's contemporaries - those living at the time the prophecy is given - so we say that the prophecy has a near fulfillment. Jonah said, "Forty days and God will destroy Nineveh." He did not qualify that with any "ifs," "ands" or "buts". But it must have been conditional because they repented and God relented. That could have been fulfilled in the time that Jonah prophesied it, but it was not. There are some conditional prophecies that do not sound conditional.

Some prophecies are unconditional. Psalm 104:9-11: "The covenant which He made with Abraham [Genesis 12] and His oath to Isaac [Genesis 26] and He confirmed it to Jacob [Genesis 35] for a statute to Israel as an everlasting covenant saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance.'"

There God, straightforward, without any conditions, without anything they needed to do, promised that they would receive the land as their inheritance. It was unconditional. "The Lord has sworn and will not relent."

I have come to a conclusion. Any prophecy which depends on God alone or belongs to ultimate councils of His will should be considered unconditional. If that were not so we wouldn't have any prophecy that is certain. Our a-millennial friends might say that you can't depend on any prophecy for sure because they are all conditional. However, there are many prophecies in Scripture which God has made which are not conditional at all. That, in a special way, relates to the nation of Israel and the Church in this present age.

I think Jeremiah states that very clearly. Jeremiah 31 beginning at verse 31: "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them,' says the Lord. [Verse 33] 'But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' saith the Lord. 'I will put My law in their minds and I will write it on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be My people.'"

To whom is this made? To the house of Israel. Verse 34: "'No more shall every man teach his neighbor and every man his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me from the least to the greatest,' says the Lord, 'for I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more.'"

There is a prophecy that has no condition in it. I speak kindly again. But certain people, who are genuine Christians, say this does

not refer to Israel but it refers to the Church. That is not so. It is to the house of Israel. In the book of Hebrews we find that this covenant is still in the future.

Notice the guarantee of that. Jeremiah 31:35: "Thus says the Lord who gives the sun for a light by day, the laws of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar, (the Lord of hosts is His name), 'If these laws depart from before Me,' says the Lord, 'then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me.' Thus says the Lord, 'If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done,' says the Lord."

In other words, the Lord is saying, "The sun and moon and stars are there. The earth is there. And as long as they are there I'll not break My word concerning that new covenant to Israel." There will come a day when the Lord will enter into that covenant with the house of Israel.

Q. Is this a promise that the Jews will still be His chosen people?

A. Indeed so. He has not set them aside. In Romans, Paul says they are still His people. [See Romans 11.]

The background of Jonah chapter 4 is the repentance of Nineveh in chapter 3. Jonah 4:1: But it displeased Jonah exceedingly and he became angry. So he prayed to the Lord and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this my word when I was still in my country? Therefore, I fled previously toward Tarshish. For I know that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abundant in loving kindness, and One who repents from the evil. Therefore, now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."

This gives us an insight into the reason Jonah fled in chapter 1 instead of going to Nineveh. He said, verse 2: "Wasn't this what I said when I was still in my country?" He probably said, "Lord, if I go and preach you will change your mind about judging them and then they'll come and destroy my people." In verse 3 he said: "It is better for me to die than to live." He was thinking about the awful future for his own people because Nineveh had repented. Verse 2 especially is a key verse to understand the reactions of Jonah to the command of the Lord in chapter 1. Jonah was so concerned about his own people and he knew what Assyria would do now that they had been spared.

Verse 4: Then the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter [that word "succah" would mean out of some branches or leaves], and sat under it in the shade till he might see what would become of the city. [He was still hoping the Lord would destroy them.]

Verse 6: And the Lord prepared a plant and made it to come up over Jonah that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. But as morning dawned the next day, God prepared a worm and it damaged the plant that it withered. And it happened that when the sun arose that God prepared a vehement east wind, and the sun beat on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

Here was a plant which came up, and the Lord destroyed it by a worm and then He prepared that vehement east wind. In the middle east those east winds can be fierce. Jonah was growing faint and wished to die (verse 8).

You will notice in verse 6 I read, "And the Lord God prepared a plant." My Bible has a note that the exact identity of that Hebrew word is unknown. You may have the word "gourd" in your Bible. Let me digress a bit and tell about my own personal experience.

I remember noticing that this word was indiscriminate and didn't know exactly what it stood for. In August 1957 an article appeared in The Washington Post headed, "Bible Gardens of Israel Depict Holy Land Sites." In this article the lady described the gardens of Israel in the United States located just off the Woodbridge exit of the New Jersey Turnpike. The description included "here we find the biblical gourd in which shade was grown that protected Jonah." When I read that I decided we must see it. So the Bishop family drove up to the biblical gardens outside the New Jersey Turnpike.

Though there was a great deal in those gardens, I don't remember much about it because I was looking for that plant. We hunted around for it and found the spot where it was supposed to be - but there wasn't any plant. Whatever it was it had died, and at the point I didn't know what the people of Israel thought that plant might be.

A number of years later when I was in Jerusalem I visited the Bible gardens of Israel. When I paid my entrance fee I asked the lady who was there, "Where will I find the plant of Jonah?" She couldn't understand English and I couldn't understand Hebrew, so I never found that plant.

Just this week [week of Nov. 22, 1999] our son visited us and we went through some of my library to determine what books he might want, and we found a book, "The Bible Gardens of Israel." There was the directory to those Bible Gardens in New Jersey. Here they defined the plant. It says in Jonah 4:6, "And the Lord prepared a gourd...." In the book they define it as the castor bean plant. So the word "gourd" in your Bible would be correct.

Jonah 4:9 and 10: Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "It is right for me

to be angry even to death." But the Lord said, "You have pity on the plant for which you have not labored nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and much livestock?"

That is quite self-explanatory. One problem is the "one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand." Does that refer to children? Or does it refer to adults? I don't know. It probably refers to adults because many of those people were not able to read or write. Anyhow, there were a hundred and twenty thousand people which God said to Jonah, "Aren't you concerned for them? And also for the livestock?" because a righteous man regards the life of his animal. So there is a John 3:16 in the Old Testament. God was concerned for the lost of the city of Nineveh.

Turn to the book of Nahum. For the date, in chapter 3 verse 8 God says: "Are you better than No Amon that was situated by the rivers that had the waters around her, whose rampart was the sea, whose wall was the sea, Ethiopia and Egypt her strength, and it was boundless? Yet she was carried away. She went into captivity."

When Nahum was speaking, No Amon had fallen. No Amon was at that time the capital of Egypt, located about four hundred miles up the Nile River in the area of Luxor and Karnak. That was all destroyed by Ashurbanipal and the Assyrians in 612 B.C. Jonah ministered around 750 B.C., so Nahum came a hundred to a hundred and fifty years after Jonah. Nahum pronounced judgment upon Nineveh.

Nahum 1:3: "The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, but He will not at all acquit the wicked." Notice in verse 1 that Nahum is speaking to Nineveh. Verse 6: "Who can stand before His judgment?"

Then verse 9: "Why do you conspire against the Lord?" Apparently at this point Nineveh had totally departed again from the Lord, and Nahum was pronouncing God's judgment upon them.

Then in chapter 2 he describes the destruction and the siege of Nineveh. Verse 3: "The shield of his mighty men is made red. The valiant men are in scarlet. The chariots are flaming torches [or fires of steel] in the day of his preparation, and the spears are brandished, the chariots rage in the streets." Verse 4: They jostle one another in the broad roads. They seem like torches; they run like lightning. He remembers his nobles. They stumble in their walk. They make haste to his walls and the defense is prepared."

Here is a simple prophecy: "The gates of the rivers are opened and the palace is dissolved. It is decreed. She shall be led away captive, she shall be broken up and her maidservants shall mourn as the voice of doves beating upon their hearts."

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It is interesting that Nineveh had a tremendous fortification around it. But it was located on the Euphrates River, and historians tell us that the river flooded and washed away a part of the embankments and the enemy was able to rush in and conquer Nineveh, which was supposed to be almost impenetrable.

Here Nahum, speaking by the word of the Lord, describes the way in which Nineveh will be destroyed.

Then, Nahum chapter 3:18 and 19: "Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria. Your nobles rest, your people are scattered on the mountains and no one gathers them. Your injury has no healing, your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?"

Many cities that have been destroyed have been rebuilt. But that was never true of Nineveh. It was destroyed and never rebuilt, in verse 19: "Your injury has no healing." Xenophon, a Greek historian, thought that the ruins of Nineveh were of some Parthian city. When Alexander the Great fought his famous battle of Arbela nearby they did not realize that they were near Nineveh. The location of Nineveh was not found until 1842, and extensive diggings were done there.

Nineveh repented, then turned from the Lord, and Nahum predicted exactly what would happen, and which did happen.

That brings our study on Nineveh, Jonah and Nahum to a close.

Prayer: Our Father, we realize we are handling the Word of God, and we thank You for these testimonies that not only is God concerned for the lost, that He will do all He can to bring them unto Himself, but when men turn from Him they can expect judgment from a holy God. We think, Lord, of our own country and its amoral basis, and we pray that believers as a whole may rise up in holiness and spread the gospel before it is eternally too late. We thank You that our trust is in You and that the story is only begun by our faith in a living Savior. Dismiss us now with Your blessing. In the Savior's name. Amen.